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ABSTRACT

Students' goals (motives) for their schooling have been the focus of much recent research and have been shown to significantly influence important aspects of their cognitive engagement and academic achievement. This paper presents the results of a qualitative investigation into the nature and characteristics of students' social and academic goals, reporting the results of a series of structured, semistructured, and conversational interviews with students and teachers in primary and secondary schools in New South Wales, Australia. Interviews were designed to determine what goals students have and how the goals relate to each other, as well as various aspects of their cognitive engagement and academic achievement. Participants were 86 students, aged 12 to 15 years (63% Anglo-Australian), and 12 teachers from 8 schools in the Sydney metropolitan region. Results confirm that students in this sample have academic and social goals congruent with those identified in other contexts and other studies. These goals, as the literature has indicated, are salient correlates of students' motivation, cognitive engagement, and academic performance. The study further confirms that students can and do hold multiple social and academic goals in academic context, supporting the validity of a multiple goal, or interactionist, approach to goal studies. The study also supports academic and social goals as two distinct classes of goals, and it confirms the distinction between maladaptive and adaptive goals. An appendix charts students' goal descriptions and associated behaviors, affective reactions, and interview statements. (Contains 87 references.) (SLD)

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Psychological parameters of students' social and academic goals: A qualitative investigation

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Students' goals (motives) for their schooling have been the focus of much recent research and have been shown to significantly influence important aspects of their cognitive engagement and academic achievement. Despite this, cogent descriptions of these goals have been limited. Several authors have identified the need for research which specifies students' goals more clearly. In addition, these authors have suggested that qualitative methodologies are particularly appropriate for such research. This paper presents the results of a qualitative investigation into the nature and character of students' social and academic goals. Specifically, the paper reports the results of a series of structured, semi-structured and conversational interviews with students and teachers attending and teaching in primary and secondary schools in New South Wales, Australia. The study helps to ascertain both what distinct social and academic goals students may hold in school settings and how students' goals relate to each other and to various aspects of their cognitive engagement and academic achievement.

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Goal theory, also known as *achievement goal theory* (Urdan & Maehr, 1995), is one of a number of social-cognitive theories of motivation have emerged since the 'cognitive revolution' of the late 1960's (Pervin, 1992). Other examples include self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986), attribution theory (Weiner, 1986), and expectancy-value theory (Eccles, Adler, Futterman, Goff, Kaczala, Meece, & Midgely, 1983). Goal theory is also related to a number of '*self*-centred' theories such as self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and self-worth theory (Covington, 1984).

In achievement goal theory, goals are defined as cognitive representations of the different *purposes* students may adopt in achievement situations (Urdan & Maehr, 1995; Pintrich, Marx, & Boyle, 1993; Wentzel, 1991a; Ford & Nichols, 1991). That is, students' goals answer the basic question: '*why* am I doing this task?' (Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992). In answering this question, students' goals guide and direct their behaviour and cognition as they engage in academic tasks (Weiner, 1986; Dweck & Elliot, 1983).

Performance and Mastery Goals

Recent research has focused on two general answers to the 'why' question outlined above. These represent two particular goal orientations. Students who engage in a task primarily to improve their level of competence and understanding are said to have a *mastery* goal orientation (Ames & Archer, 1988). Whilst various conceptions of the mastery orientation exist in the literature, the common denominator of this orientation is that learning is valued for its own sake and success is defined by improved competence and understanding (Butler, 1987). Also central to a mastery goal orientation is the belief that effort and outcomes covary (Ames, 1992). Mastery goals, which are substantially related to *intrinsic* goals (Harter, 1981), *learning* goals (Dweck & Elliot, 1983; Dweck & Leggett, 1988), *task* goals (Urdan & Maehr, 1995), *task-involved* goals (Nicholls, 1984), and *process* goals (Ertmer & Newby, 1996); are 'self-referenced' and, as such, subjective feelings of efficacy and pride are associated with effort and achievement in pursuing self-referenced standards (Nicholls, Cheung, Lauer, & Patashnick, 1989; Meece, 1994).

In contrast, performance goals, which are substantially related to *extrinsic* goals (Harter, 1981), *ability* goals (Urdan & Maehr, 1995), *ego-involved* goals (Nicholls, 1984), *ego-social* goals (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988; Nicholls, Patashnick, & Nolen, 1985), and *product* goals (Ertmer & Newby, 1996); are referenced against the performance of others and/or against external standards eg. grades (Ames, 1992). Central to a performance goal is a focus on ability (Dweck, 1986), self-worth (Covington, 1984), and gaining favourable judgments from others (Meece, 1994); rather than on effort. Success is defined by 'beating' others or surpassing normative standards (Ames, 1992). Subjective feelings of pride are gained from doing well, especially with little effort, rather than from improved competence through appropriate effort (Ames, 1984).

Other Goals

Despite the emphasis in recent research on performance and mastery goals, students may hold other goals which potentially effect their cognitive engagement and academic performance (Blumenfeld, 1992). For example, *work avoidance* goals (Meece & Holt, 1993; Ainley, 1993; Nicholls, Patashnick, & Nolen, 1985) represent a type of goal orientation where students deliberately avoid engaging in academic tasks and/or attempt to minimise the effort required to complete academic tasks. This orientation, although distinct from both performance and mastery orientations (Meece & Holt, 1993), may nevertheless combine with these orientations to effect students' cognitive engagement and academic achievement (Ainley, 1993).

The goal orientations above (performance, mastery, and work avoidance) may be characterised as *academic* goal orientations. That is, they are concerned, primarily, with the *academic reasons* students have for succeeding in academic situations (Urdan & Maehr, 1995). This does not mean that social factors, such as the influence of parents, peers, teachers, and the learning situation in general, are not important in the adoption and operation of academic goals. In fact, quite the opposite appears to be the case (eg. Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Maehr & Midgley, 1991; Ames, 1992). Rather it means that academic goals focus students' attention on academic reasons for succeeding (or not).

Another important class of goals are students' *social* goals (Urdan & Maehr, 1995; Blumenfeld, 1992). In contrast to their academic goals, students' social goals are concerned with the *social* reasons for trying to achieve in academic situations (Urdan and Maehr, 1995). As such,

students social goals typically cause them to focus on the people (individuals and/or groups) associated with academic tasks as well as on the tasks themselves. For example, a student wishing to achieve in an academic situation for the social reason of 'pleasing my parents', may focus their attention on their parents' expectations for their school work as they engage in an academic task. This definition of social goals differs from definitions used elsewhere in the literature which define social goals as the social reasons for wanting to achieve or not in *social* situations (eg. Pietrucha & Erdley, 1996; Lochman, Wayland, & White, 1993; Wentzel, 1991b, 1989; Eder, 1985). Social goals in the present research are specifically limited to the social purposes students express in academic achievement situations

Although not extensively researched, students' social goals are, nevertheless, well represented in the theoretical literature. Moreover, even within the research based primarily on students' academic goals, social constructs have often been included alongside (or even within) the research measures (Urdan & Maehr, 1995). Maehr's (1984) formulation, for example, includes social solidarity goals in addition to performance, mastery, and extrinsic reward goals. Pintrich and his colleagues' (1993) formulation includes social goals alongside performance, mastery, and epistemic goals. Dodge, Asher, and Parkhurst (1989) emphasise the multiple (and sometimes conflicting) social goals students may hold with respect to their schooling. Urdan and Maehr (1995) include social approval, social compliance, social solidarity, and social welfare goals in their list of potential social goals students may hold. Similarly, Ford (1992) has presented a detailed description of eight types of social goals and their differential effects on motivation, cognition and affect. Finally, Wentzel (1991a, 1989) has examined students' multiple social and academic goals and their interactive effects on students' academic achievement. (It should be noted, however, that both Wentzel's and Ford's conceptualisations of social goals are not entirely congruent with the definition of social goals used in this research).

Multiple Goals in Context

Most research to date has focused on *single* goals (usually either performance or mastery goals) and their effects on various aspects of students' motivation and academic performance (Ainley, 1993; Meece & Holt, 1993). Recent research, however, has emphasised that students can and do hold *multiple* social *and* academic goals in school settings (Meece, 1991). This even extends to mastery and performance goals which, although they may be theoretically dichotomous may, in practice, be held simultaneously by students (Seifert, 1995; Ainley, 1993; Pintrich & Garcia, 1991). Moreover, the way students organise and coordinate their multiple goals is substantially related to their academic performance (Wentzel, 1991a, 1989). The present study explicitly adopts a multiple goal (or *interactionist*) perspective. This means that goals are assumed to operate in the context of other goals. Thus, the effects of any individual goal on students' motivation, cognition, and/or academic performance should be assessed in relation to other goals that students may hold. This is discussed further in 'Research Directions' (below).

In addition to what might be called the *psychological context* of students' goals (ie. the relationship of students' multiple goals to each other), the *socio-academic context* of students' goals has also been examined in the literature. The socio-academic context of students' goals refers to aspects of, particularly, the school and/or classroom which influence both the goals that students adopt and the ways in which those goals are pursued. Salient aspects of the socio-academic context of the classroom, for example, which may influence students' goal orientation include the types of tasks students are assigned, the methods of assessment used to evaluate students' task performance, the ways in which students work is recognised, the types of student interaction promoted in the classroom, etc. (Ames, 1992, Meece, 1991, Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Similarly, the school may influence, through various organisational, cultural, and academic structures and practices; students' goal orientation. (Maehr & Anderman, 1993; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

Of equal importance, however, is the way in which any organisational or cultural practice is interpreted by students (Graham & Golan, 1991; Eccles et al, 1983). Students may interpret the same practice or structure in very different ways and, thus, presumably, this will effect their goal orientation in a given situation. So, for example, the same classroom task may promote a performance orientation in one student, a mastery orientation in another, a social affiliation orientation in yet another , and so on. Thus the socio-academic context of a school or class must be examined with reference to the beliefs students hold about that situation.

Goals and Cognitive Engagement

The relationship between students' goals and their engagement in learning has been a growing focus of research. Recent cognitive models of learning have focused on the mediating influence of prior knowledge, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies on the acquisition and assimilation of new information. Prior knowledge, also known as *declarative* knowledge (Paris, Lipson & Wixon, 1983), refers both to the quantity of knowledge (what is known) and the quality of knowledge (how well knowledge is organised and structured) (Pintrich et al., 1993). Cognitive strategies, also referred to as *learning tactics* (Derry, 1989) and *learning strategies* (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986), are the means by which students select, acquire, and integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1996). Metacognitive strategies, also known as *metamemory acquisition procedures* (MAPS) (Borkowski, Carr, Rellinger, & Pressley, 1990), *learning strategies* (Derry, 1989), and *thinking strategies* (Nickerson, Perkins & Smith, 1985); are the means by which students self-manage their learning. Using these definitions, students' *cognitive engagement* may be defined as the extent to which they appropriately access and activate their prior knowledge, cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies in order to acquire and integrate new information (Pintrich et al., 1993; Borkowski et al., 1990).

Pintrich et al. (1993), describe cognitive engagement as a form of motivated behaviour. That is, students can be said to be motivated towards their learning when they:

(a) attend to, or focus on, a given academic task;
(b) choose to activate appropriate prior knowledge, cognitive and metacognitive strategies towards the completion of that task;
(c) do so with a given level of intensity, and
(d) persist in using appropriate prior knowledge and strategies until completion of the task.

If students are not sufficiently or appropriately motivated, however, they may display negative, or maladaptive, patterns of cognitive engagement (Ames, 1992). Several such patterns have been identified in the literature and are readily apparent in the classroom (Cantwell, 1992; Ames & Ames, 1991; Ames & Archer, 1988; Graham & Golan, 1991; Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988; Pintrich & Garcia, 1991; Nolen, 1988). Maladaptively motivated students may, for example, not attend to a given task, not activate appropriate prior knowledge, cognitive strategies, and/or metacognitive strategies; or not persist in the use of these strategies. Adaptively motivated students, on the other hand, are more likely to attend to academic tasks, appropriately access prior knowledge and effective cognitive and metacognitive strategies; and persist in the use of these strategies. The literature has consistently found that a performance goal orientation is associated with maladaptive motivational patterns and, hence, maladaptive patterns of cognitive engagement. A mastery goal orientation, conversely, is associated with adaptive motivational patterns and adaptive patterns of cognitive engagement. Thus, there is a substantial link between at least two goal orientations and the quality of students' cognitive engagement. Other goals may have similar effects students' cognitive engagement.

Research Orientation

Pintrich et al. (1993) suggest that "there is a need for an examination of how students' social goals could complement, compensate, or conflict with mastery and performance motivation goals" (p. 181). The successful pursuit of adaptive social goals may, for example, *complement* the pursuit of academic goals by directly influencing academic achievement (Wentzel, 1989; Feshbach & Feshbach, 1987). Alternatively adaptive social goals may *indirectly* influence academic achievement by contributing to school retention (Parker & Asher, 1987), promoting positive classroom related academic behaviours (Thomas, 1980), and/or enhancing positive teacher-student and peer-student relations in the classroom (Ford & Tisak, 1983; Green, Forehand, Beck, & Vosk, 1980). Social goals may *compensate* for academic goals where academic goals provide insufficient or inappropriate motivation for students to engage learning (Wentzel, 1991b), or where social *and* academic goals are required for the successful completion of academic tasks, such as in cooperative learning situations (Slavin, 1987, 1984). Social goals my also *conflict* with academic goals by undermining students' intrinsic motivation to achieve (Wentzel, 1991b), or by distracting students from academic tasks (Kozeki, 1985). Whether complementary, compensatory, or conflicting, a key aspect of this study is to describe

interactions between students' social and academic goals and their relations to students' cognitive engagement and academic achievement.

There is also a need within goal theory to begin to more systematically assess students' goals in 'real life' classroom contexts. Several authors have identified this need (eg. Lemos, 1996; Blumenfeld, 1992; Nicholls, 1984). As Lemos (1996) points out, this is particularly so because:

(a) although students' goals (especially performance and mastery goals) have been identified in classroom contexts, their actual operation in these contexts is still largely unexplored.

(b) students' goals are hypothesised to be directly influenced by the contexts in which these goals are held. Several studies have identified the changes to students' goals that may be bought about by contextual changes in classroom and school dynamics (eg. Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Maehr & Anderman, 1993; Maehr & Midgley, 1991; McInerney, 1991). Despite this, the ways in which students' goals are related to specific contextual features (such as methods of teaching, modes of assessment, peer interaction, etc.) are still largely a matter of theory rather than direct investigation.

(c) descriptions of students' actual classroom behaviour will promote the conceptual clarity of goal theory. That is, goals, similar to any psychological construct, are inferred from students' actual behaviour and reactions. Richer descriptions of students' behaviour, therefore, should enhance descriptions of the unobserved constructs supposedly underlying students' observed behaviour.

(d) policy applications or goal theory based on actual classroom descriptions of students' goals should be maximally useful to practitioners.

Finally, there is a need for further study in the Australian context because, despite some exceptions (eg. McInerney, 1992; McInerney & Sinclair, 1992), there has been little research to date within the Australian context, from a goal theory perspective, which has sought to systematically identify, and explore the characteristics of, students' social and academic goals. Research in Australia to date has generally accepted (not without reason) goals already identified in the extant literature. These goals, however, need to be validated in the Australian context. As importantly, Australian students may hold a range of goals *not yet identified* in the literature. Attempts should be made, therefore, to ascertain what these goals are, and to begin to describe the ways in which they may effect students' cognitive engagement and academic performance.

Purpose of the Study

Given the above, the objectives of the present study were to:

(a) identify a range of social and academic goals held by students in Australian classroom/school contexts.

(b) examine the nature of these goals, particularly with respect to their perceived effects on various aspects of students' classroom/school behaviour and academic achievement.

(c) examine patterns of goal adherence amongst students in the sample. That is, do certain goals appear to 'go together' or not? If so, how are these patterns effected by salient individual and contextual factors.

Participants

The participants in the study were students (n = 86) and teachers (n = 12) from eight schools in the Sydney metropolitan region. The students ranged from twelve to fifteen years of age. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the student sample were female and forty-four percent (44%) were male. Several different socio-cultural groups were represented in the student sample. Sixty-three percent (63%) of the sample were Anglo-Australians with the remainder being from other ethnic backgrounds. The teachers ranged from twenty-four to fifty-six years of age and had between five and twenty-six years teaching experience. Eight of the teachers were secondary school teachers and four were primary school teachers. All the teachers were from Anglo-Australian background. Two of the schools were secondary private schools, two were secondary public schools, and four were public primary schools. The schools were chosen from different geographical locations within the Sydney metropolitan region (eg. north, south-western, and western Sydney) in order to maximise the cultural and socio-economic diversity of the sample.

Method

Orientation

The study was designed to identify and describe a range of social and academic goals students may hold in relation to their schooling. Qualitative research is considered particularly appropriate for this type of exploratory research (Atkinson, 1990; Jacob, 1987; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Moreover, one particular approach to qualitative research, *phenomenography*, has been widely used in educational research, specifically with respect to aspects of students' cognitive engagement (Biggs & Watkins, 1993; Marton & Saljo, 1984). The phenomenographic approach to qualitative research examines learning from the learner's and the teacher's perspective, rather than from the teacher's perspective alone. It typically focuses on the ways in which students interpret and react to learning situations. This is particularly important as, in some situations at least, students' perceptions and interpretations of events may shape their academic behaviour even more than the events themselves (Eccles et al., 1983).

The phenomenological approach to qualitative research fits well with constructivist conceptions of students' learning underlying this study which focus on the ways in which students' construct meaning for themselves in learning situations (Oldfather, 1994; Lebow, 1993; Piaget, 1973). Constructivist conceptions of learning have proven useful (even imperative) in examining students' motivation for learning (Oldfather, 1994; Biggs & Watkins, 1993; Weinstein, 1989). This phenomenological (or ethnographic) approach is also essential when developing an emic or 'insiders' view of, in this case, students' motivation and cognition. This in turn is imperative if the goal descriptions generated from the research are to have maximum contextual validity (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993; Erickson, 1986). Finally, the phenomenologcial approach upholds both the inductive nature and holistic perspective of qualitative research (Patton and Westby, 1992; Jacob, 1987). Blumenfeld (1992) confirms that research incorporating qualitative approaches, such as those described above, will make a useful contribution to 'thickening' the descriptions of various goals and how they operate in classrooms.

Data Sources

The present study incorporates three forms of phenomenological research: conversational, semi-structured, and structured interviews. These were arranged in a hierarchy beginning with the conversational interviews. The conversational interviews were deliberately made as open-ended and flexible as possible. Typically they would begin with a general question which oriented the conversation but did not attempt to limit either its diversity or complexity. Examples of such questions include:

(a) 'what's it like to be motivated at school?'
(b) 'what sort of things do you do when you are motivated to learn something?'
(c) 'when you are not motivated at school what does it feel like?'
(d) 'when you really want to learn something what do you do?'

Thus, the conversational interviews attempted to identify and describe a wide range of behaviours and affective reactions associated with students' motivational orientations. The defining characteristic of the conversational interviews was that the researcher did not have a fixed end-point in mind (Patton & Westby, 1992). The interview, within the broad parameters of the topic under consideration, was allowed to develop as it would.

The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to gain more information about incidences and responses recorded in the conversational interviews. That is, the conversational interviews provided a basis for some tentative hypotheses and initial categories which were then further explored in the semi-structured interviews. Related to this, the semi-structured interviews also provided the opportunity to identify and explore atypical or idiosyncratic responses. These 'un-patterns' (Miles & Huberman, 1994) are particularly helpful for clarifying and directing the development of 'grounded' theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus the semi-structured interviews not only attempted to verify past responses, but also maintained a 'unique case' orientation (Patton & Westby, 1992). Participants in the semi-structured interviews included some who had been involved in the conversational interviews, as well as new participants. The new participant's responses not only provided more information about existing responses, but also acted to confirm (or not) previous responses.

The structured interviews, in contrast to both the semi-structured and conversational interviews had not only a definite end-point (that is, a specific interview objective) but, usually, a specified strategy for achieving that end-point. This meant that, typically, a structured interview would have a pre-formulated set of questions which attempted to investigate defined hypotheses and/or established categories in a systematic and structured way. This does not mean that the structured interviews were in any way inquisitorial, or that considerations related to the psychological and physical comfort of participants were abandoned. Rather it meant that the structured interview questions deliberately converged on particular aspects of the research. Examples of questions used in the structured interviews include:

(a) Do you agree that students who are motivated do better at school academically. If so, why?

(b) Some students say that it is necessary to be motivated before they can do productive work at school. Do you need to be motivated or can you be un-motivated and still do productive school-work?

It is critical to note that the structured interviews came *after* a long process of hypothesis and category generation in the context of the less structured interviews and considerable time in the field. Thus, the structured interviews were embedded in both a theoretical and interpersonal context developed over time and were, in this respect, the culmination of the interview process. Structured interviews, due to their focussed nature would be inappropriate at earlier stages of the research.

Method of Analysis

The primary method of analysis for the interview data was *inductive content analysis* (also known as *protocol analysis*) (Ericsson & Simon, 1984; Krippendorf, 1980). This method was employed in order to specifically uphold the inductive nature and holistic perspective of the research mentioned earlier.

In analysing the content of each of the three types of interviews the parameters of students' goals were inferred from a twofold process which involved:

(a) assessing the 'plain meaning' of students' and teacher's statements and,

(b) examining the contexts in which these statements were made. The context of a statement included both its vertical context (ie. the time during the interview in which the statement was made) and its horizontal context (ie. its relationship to other statements made in the present and other interviews).

Specifically, the process involved the following. The conversational interviews were analysed by the researcher *during* the course of the study and tentative categories (students' goals) were developed. Each of these categories were then verified by *participants in the research setting*. That is, typically, the researcher would show three to five participants a set of statements which the researcher had grouped together and ask the participant questions such as: 'Do these statements appear to 'go together' or not?' 'If so, what is common between them?'. 'How would you describe this group of statements as a whole?'. On the basis of participant's responses to these questions, the researcher's initial categories were modified. Thus, a shared consensus as to the central meaning of a number of, apparently, related statements formed the basis of the categories. This was true for both the individual categories and the grouped categories (discussed later) developed in the study. It should also be emphasised that, consistent with constant comparative methodology and the induction of grounded theory, the conceptual categories (students' goals) were inferred from the operational categories (apparently homogeneous groups of students responses) rather than vice versa (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Erickson, 1986).

The modified categories (which were still held flexible) were then used as the basis for questions in the semi-structured interviews. That is, the semi-structured interviews used categories developed in the conversational interviews as a starting point. Content analysis of the semi-structured interviews, however, allowed for further refinement of the categories. Thus, no *new* categories were generated on the basis of the semi-structured interviews but, particularly, the internal homogeneity, or *inclusiveness* (Constas, 1992) of the established categories was explored.

Finally, the structured interviews were used to assess the external heterogeneity, or *mutual exclusiveness*, (Constas, 1992) of the categories. In particular, the structured interviews attempted to account for 'difficult' responses. That is, on the basis of the structured interviews, responses that appeared to belong to more than one category were either assigned to one category or treated as genuine un-patterns. Thus, responses which did not appear to fit into a category at this stage were *not*

forcibly assigned to a category just to 'soak up' the data. In this way, both the integrity of the data and the integrity of the grounded theory were maintained. As a result of this overall approach to the content analysis, the final categories did not overlap and the data in any given category shared a verified 'common theme'.

Where a category identified in the research was equivalent to a category (goal) already extant in the literature, it was given the label already used in the literature. This was done for three reasons. Firstly, a requisite of qualitative research (any research really) is that it should, where possible, fit into current theoretical literature (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). Using established labels is one way to enhance this fit. Secondly, the theoretical orientation of this research highlights the specific need for conceptual clarification in goal theory rather than for further conceptual obfuscation. That is, there are already several labels used in the literature for essentially the *same* goals. Adding to this list would only serve to 'muddy the waters' further. Thirdly, the category labels, while important for conveying meaning, can only ever be general indicators as to the content of the categories (Constas, 1992). The 'real' meaning of the categories can only be properly inferred from a thorough analysis of the responses in each category as a whole. Thus, there is unlikely to be a significant loss of meaning by using category labels extant in the literature but still congruent with responses in each category.

Results

Individual Goals

Each of the categories generated in the research represents a particular motivational goal held by students in the sample. A total of seven motivational goals were identified: performance, mastery, work avoidance, social approval, social responsibility, social affiliation, and social status. The table in the Appendix includes a brief description of each of these goals as well as a sample of reported behaviours, reported affective reactions, and interview statements, associated with each of the goals. The table entries are a representative but, necessarily, not an exhaustive list of responses from which each of the goals were inferred.

Multiple Goals

As indicated earlier, recent research has emphasised that students can and do hold *multiple* social *and* academic goals in school settings. The present study confirms that students do hold multiple social and academic goals. A multiple goal orientation was inferred from students' statements such as:

(a) 'I try to behave well and to do well in my exams at high school'. [Social responsibility and performance orientation].

(b) I try to do well in maths and to understand the teacher'. [Performance and mastery orientation].

(c) 'I want to go well in all subjects and have lots of fun with my friends'. [Performance and social affiliation orientation].

(d) 'I hope to do well in school and to never get expelled'. [Performance and social responsibility orientation].

(e) 'I want to get top in the HSC and get many friends'. [Performance and social affiliation orientations].

(f) 'I hope to study hard and to get a well paying job when I finish the HSC'. [Mastery and social status orientations].

(g) 'I want to become popular and to achieve well in sport and my school subjects'. [Social affiliation and performance orientations].

(h) 'I avoid work I know I can't do because I don't want to look stupid in front of the class'. [Work avoidance and performance orientations].

These results indicate that students' multiple goals may consist of various combinations of social and academic goals. Not every combination of goals reported in the study is represented here. However, there appeared to be no particular limit to the ways in which different goals may be combined by students.

Categories of Goals

Of as much interest as the descriptions of students' goals were the ways in which these goals were further categorised by participants in the study. That is, not only were individual goals identified, but groups of goals were also identified.

Social and Academic Goals. Participants (both teachers and students) in the study distinguished between a range of social and academic goals. Consistent with the theoretical orientation of this study, students' academic goals were identified as a class of goals that consisted of the academic reasons students had for succeeding in academic situations. The academic goals identified in this study were performance, mastery, and work avoidance. So, for example, students pursuing these three academic goals variously stated that they were trying to achieve in order to 'beat other students', 'master the material', or 'avoid doing too much work'.

Social goals on the other hand, were a class of goals which consisted of the social reasons students had for succeeding in academic situations. The social goals identified in this study were social approval, social responsibility, social affiliation, and social status. So, for example, students pursuing these goals variously stated that they wanted to achieve in order to gain the approval of others, display a sense of responsibility to others, enhance a sense of belonging to a group, or in order to attain wealth and/or position. Typically, these social goals involved references to other people (e.g. peers, teachers, and/or parents), *in the context* of academic tasks and situations. For example, several students reported focussing on their teacher and, what they perceived to be his/her expectations for their classroom behaviour, as they engaged in classroom tasks. In these cases, the teacher's expectations related to the academic task at hand, rather than the task alone formed a focus for the students' attention.

Goals and Cognitive Engagement

In addition to identifying broader categories of goals (social and academic goals), participants in the study also categorised students' goals according to their level of functionality with respect to student's cognitive engagement and academic achievement.

Adaptive and Maladaptive Goals. An adaptive goal was identified as one which led to enhanced cognitive engagement and academic performance. A maladaptive goal was identified as one that led to decreased cognitive engagement and academic performance. For example, an adaptive goal was associated with behaviours such as 'getting involved with class work', 'putting in lots of effort', 'making sure I understand the teacher', 'doing extra work', 'planning out what I have to do', etc. There was also an affective component associated with adaptive goals variously described as 'feeling exited about my work', 'wanting to try hard', 'looking forward to how it [a project] will turn out', 'really enjoying what I do', etc. A maladaptive goal was associated with behaviours such as 'doing the bare minimum', 'not wanting to start', 'copying of other people', 'just doing it [school work] without thinking', etc. Affective reactions associated with maladaptive goals were 'feeling angry about having to do it [particular school work]', 'feeling bored', 'not concentrating', 'wishing I was somewhere else', 'not caring whether I do well or not', etc. In general terms, a goal was described as adaptive when it led to students being 'focused' on the academic task at hand. When a particular goal distracted students attention from academic tasks it was described as maladaptive.

An important finding of this study, however, was that *any goal* could be considered adaptive or maladaptive *depending on the context* in which the goal was pursued. That is, students' goals were not categorised as being adaptive or maladaptive *per se*. Rather the 'adaptiveness' of a goal was judged with reference to the context in which the goal was pursued. Consistent with the literature, the 'context' of a goal referred to both its *psychological* context and its *socio-academic* context (discussed earlier). Examples of how each of these contexts effected the adaptiveness of particular goals follow.

Several participant identified the, potentially, maladaptive effects of a performance goal orientation (such as, for example, not wanting to attempt difficult work for fear of 'looking stupid' in front of other students). However, participants also reported that a performance goal orientation was not *necessarily* detrimental to students' cognitive engagement and ongoing motivation. For example, some students held a strong mastery goal orientation *simultaneously* with a performance goal orientation. These students reported that the potentially negative effects of the performance orientation on their motivation and academic engagement were ameliorated, perhaps even eliminated, as it interacted with their mastery orientation. Thus, when they were simultaneously focussed on

understanding *and* relative performance, they did not display brittle motivation, shallow cognitive engagement, or other effects typically associated with a performance orientation. Rather, *despite the fact* that they were still focussed on 'doing well' (relative to other students), they nevertheless displayed strong ongoing motivation (even in the face of difficulties) and 'deep' cognitive engagement. Thus, these students' mastery orientation (which, in this case, formed part of the psychological context of their performance orientation) appeared to over-ride the maladaptive effects of their performance orientation.

As indicated earlier, the socio-academic context of a goal referred to salient features of the school and classroom, associated with that goal, and the way these were interpreted by the student. The socio-academic context also influenced the adaptiveness of students' goals. One school in the sample, for example, explicitly and consistently emphasised a performance orientation to learning at both the school-wide and classroom levels (especially to their senior school students). However, this orientation was promoted in the context of a school program which also emphasised the ongoing pastoral care of students by staff, the development of positive peer interactions (on an academic and social level), the value of parental involvement, and support for the ongoing reputation of the school. Thus, the school emphasised strong social affiliation and social responsibility orientations alongside the performance orientation. In *this* context the potential negative effects of a performance orientation were also apparently ameliorated. That is, again, brittle student motivation and shallow cognitive engagement did *not* appear to be prevalent *despite* the clear emphasis on a performance orientation (and a reported adoption of that orientation by students).

Moreover, this did not appear to be a case of students misreading the situation. That is, students knew the school expected high performance both in terms of absolute grades and in terms of results in comparison with other schools. They also understood that 'friendly' competition between students was accepted and valued. Yet they, nevertheless, reported styles of engagement and motivation not usually associated with a performance orientation. When questioned about this, several participants pointed to the socially supportive environment of the school, which promoted a sense of loyalty and belonging, as a reason why their ongoing motivation and cognitive engagement was sustained at a high level. Thus, the social affiliation and responsibility orientations promoted by the school appeared to over-ride the maladaptive effects of a performance orientation.

Discussion

Several important features of students' goal orientation arising from the above are discussed below.

Descriptions of Students' Goals in the Context of Current Theory

Academic Goals. Each of the academic goals (performance, mastery, and work avoidance) identified in this study have, in equivalent if not identical forms, been identified previously in the literature. Moreover, the descriptions of students' academic goals in this study are largely congruent with those in the literature. This is not an unexpected finding. The literature shows that these academic goals have been identified in many samples in a diverse range of countries e.g. Canada (Seifert, 1995); Portugal (Lemos, 1996); Hong Kong (Biggs & Watkins, 1993); and Australia (Ainley, 1993; McInerney & Sinclair, 1992). Nevertheless, the portability of these goals is further supported by the present study.

The work avoidance orientation, however, deserves some further comment. As this orientation has yet to be extensively explored in the literature, few, if any, of the specific behaviours and affective reactions reported here are noted in the literature. From this study, it appears that work avoidance orientation has many 'faces' depending on specific classroom features. That is, the orientation itself may be consistent across situations but its actual manifestation in any given situation is dependent on very specific classroom features such as, for example, the availability of a computer or other classroom technology to use as work avoiding tools. Some forms of task avoidance behaviour may, however, be an exception to this generalisation. For example, negotiating easier tasks, feigning incompetence, and needlessly questioning teachers are, perhaps, more widespread forms of task avoidance. Further research would be necessary to ascertain which types of work avoidance behaviour identified in this study (if any) are common to other contexts and which are not.

Social Goals. Some salient features of students social goals, as reported in this study, are discussed below.

The social approval orientation (wanting to achieve in order to gain the approval of others) was, as might be expected, strongly referenced to those in authority over the students ie. teachers and parents. This category did not exclude references to peers, however, clearly, most students sought approval from 'above' rather than from 'alongside' in academic situations (see the Appendix for an indicative quote). In contrast, a feature of the social responsibility orientation was that, while it included references to those in authority over students, it also included substantial references to peers. That is, students felt responsible to each other, as well as to their parents and teachers, to achieve in academic situations. This was particularly true when students were working co-operatively with each other on classroom tasks. In these situations, several students reported feeling a sense of responsibility to their fellow students to contribute academically. Conversely, in competitive situations students reported feeling less responsible (or not responsible at all) to other students to do well academically. Thus, co-operative classroom environments apparently promoted an adaptive social responsibility orientation which, in turn, promoted students' academic achievement.

The motivation for social affiliation is widely recognised in both goal theory and related literature (Kinderman, 1993; Ford, 1992; Wentzel, 1991a). A specific feature of the present descriptions is that teachers in the sample described the social affiliation primarily in negative terms, despite the fact that they recognised that an affiliative goal orientation may enhance cognitive engagement and academic performance. Students, in contrast, described the social affiliation orientation in positive terms despite the fact that they were more likely to identify the potentially negative effects that pursuing this goal may have on their ongoing motivation and achievement. For example, teachers recognised that students who wanted to achieve in order to feel part of a group (a social affiliation motivation) may be highly motivated and engaged in their school work. However, they were, nevertheless, reluctant to see students motivated in this way preferring students, in the words of one teacher, 'to be motivated because the really like what they're learning' (i.e. to hold a mastery orientation). On the other hand, students recognised that being motivated by a desire to belong had, potentially, many negative effects on their ongoing motivation and achievement (especially if they didn't do well academically on a given task and, subsequently, felt 'left out' and much less motivated to succeed academically in the future). Despite this recognition, they described being motivated to be part of a group as a positive motivation. This is a clear example of how the same goal orientation may be observed and evaluated from very different points of view. The evaluation of students' goals ie. whether they are considered 'good' or 'bad' in particular contexts by particular people; is an interesting but under-explored aspect of goal theory at present.

The motivation for social status is also well documented in the literature, both from within and outside the context of goal theory (Munsch & Kinchen, 1995; McInerney and Sinclair, 1992). A specific feature of the social status goal orientation in this study is its reported effects on students' academic engagement and performance. Students' who reported a strong social status goal orientation, typically said that their strong desire for a 'high status future' was a key incentive to work hard at school. This appeared particularly true for students from higher socio-economic backgrounds who seemed more explicitly motivated by a social status orientation than others. Thus, there appeared to be (in a qualitative sense) an interaction effect between socio-economic background and social status orientation which differentially effected students' performance. This in itself is worth noting. However, the more general point is that this confirms previous findings (eg. McInerney, 1991, 1992, Maehr, 1984) that the salience of particular goals is, potentially, dependent upon a wide range social and cultural factors not directly related to the immediate school situation.

Multiple Goals

As noted earlier, this study confirms previous findings that students can and so hold multiple goals in academic achievement situations. Dodge *et al.* (1989) describe social life as a goal coordination activity. The multiple goal perspective also means that academic 'life' (particularly with respect to students' cognitive engagement and academic performance) may be considered as goal coordination activity as well. Thus, the goal orientation of students' in academic situations should not be reduced to a assessment of whether a student has, for example, a mastery or a performance orientation. This study confirms that they may have *both* and/or other goal orientations as well. Thus students' overall goal orientation should be seen as multi- rather than uni-dimensional concept. Some implications of this for students' cognitive engagement and academic achievement were reported earlier and are discussed further below.

Categories of Students' Goals

Social and Academic Goals. The distinction between students' social and academic goals has been made consistently in the literature. However, a clear conceptual basis for this distinction has been apparently difficult to obtain. This study confirms the usefulness of the distinction that students academic goals may be defined as their *academic* purposes for wanting to achieve in academic situations while their social goals may be defined as their *social* purposes for wanting to achieve in academic situations. As indicated earlier, the later definition of social goals is not entirely congruent with definitions of social goals which focus on the social reasons that students have for achieving in *social* situations (eg. Dodge et al. 1989, Eder, 1985). However, there is an apparent 'grey area' with respect to this distinction which occurs in both this study and the literature. It becomes apparent when the social situation students want to achieve in is *also* the academic situation in which they wish to achieve. That is, when students treat the classroom, school, or other academic setting, as both an academic *and* a social situation, the two definitions of social goals converge. This highlights the difficulty in obtaining a clear definition of social goals. It also suggests that studies using different definitions of social goals may not necessarily be incompatible if the classroom (or other academic setting) is the context of the research. Whatever the case, the pursuit of social goals appears to be strongly related to students academic achievement. (Wentzel, 1991b, Feshback & Feshback, 1987) and the present study confirms the finding that the pursuit of social goals may enhance students cognitive engagement and academic achievement. Some caveats on this generalisation, however, are discussed below.

Goals and Cognitive Engagement

Adaptive and Maladaptive Goals. The finding that contextual factors influence the degree to which a particular goal orientation may be considered adaptive or maladaptive has, potentially, implications for goal theory as a whole, especially for classroom/school interventions based on a goal theory model. To date classroom or school-wide interventions have been designed to *change* the goal orientation of students in particular contexts. Typical examples include interventions that have been designed to change students' orientation from a performance to a mastery orientation. The rationale behind these interventions is that, by manipulating the socio-academic context in which students hold a performance orientation, students' will modify their goal orientation by adopting a mastery orientation. This will in turn have adaptive effects on students' ongoing motivation and cognitive engagement.

The present study does not contradict these findings. However, it does indicate that changing the socio-academic and/or psychological contexts may not only act to change students' goal orientation but may *also* change the way in which goals which continue to be held operate. That is, changes to goal contexts may not only cause students to 'switch' goals but may also cause modifications to the operation of 'un-switched' goals. Hence, a goal that is maladaptive in one socio-academic and/or psychological context may be adaptive in another. This also means that the complementary, compensatory, or conflicting nature of students' goals, to use Pintrich et al.'s (1993) terminology, is dependent upon, or at least interacts with, a fourth 'c' - context.

One implication of this finding is that there may be a significant confounding element in studies attempting to modify students goals. Have interventions modified students' goal orientations? Yes. Have the operation, or at least the operational effects, of the goals themselves been modified? Maybe. Another consequence of this finding is the corollary of studies that have found that, for example, where a mastery orientation is promoted at classroom level it may be undermined by a school-wide performance orientation (or vice versa). This study points to the possibility that, again for example, a school-wide/classroom mastery intervention may 'override' a particular class's/school's performance orientation. That is, a school/class may still promote a performance orientation, but the maladaptive effects of that orientation, if not the prevalence of the orientation itself, may be reduced by the promotion of a school-wide/class mastery orientation. This may give hope to those interested in implementing change but concerned about the 'undermining' effects of apparently contradictory practices at the classroom or school level.

Whatever the case, while it *may* be true to say that certain goals are less likely to be adaptive (in terms of students cognitive engagement) this study suggests that simply defining a goal as adaptive or maladaptive, as if that were an inherent feature of the goal itself regardless of its social-academic context, obscures the impact that the social context may have on the operation of students' goals.

From a more theoretical perspective, this finding may serve as a reminder that, as a social-cognitive theory of student motivation, the 'social' aspect of goal theory needs to be continually stressed.

Conclusion

The present study is important for several reasons. Firstly it has confirmed that students in the sample hold social and academic goals congruent with those identified in other contexts. Also, as elsewhere, these goals are salient correlates of students' motivation, cognitive engagement, and academic performance. Secondly, the study has confirmed that the students can and do hold multiple social and academic goals in academic contexts and, hence, has confirmed the validity of a multiple goal, or interactionist, approach to goal studies.

Thirdly, the study has identified two classes of goals: social and academic goals. The study confirms distinctions drawn previously between social and academic goals in the literature, but notes that difficulties in obtaining a clear conceptual basis for distinguishing between definitions of social goals still remain. The study also confirms the distinction between maladaptive and adaptive goals, particularly with respect to students' cognitive engagement. It also identifies the key finding that the adaptiveness of a goal is a function of the psychological and socio-academic contexts in which multiple goals operate.

Appendix

Students Goal Descriptions and Associate Behaviours, Affective Reactions, and Interview Statements

Goal	Reported Behaviour	Reported Affective Reaction	Interview Statement
Academic Goals			
Performance Wanting to achieve in order to out perform other students, attain certain grades /marks, or obtain tangible rewards associated with academic performance.	• inquiring often concerning teachers' expectations related to assignments. • questioning the structure of assignments, especially how many marks are awarded to each section. • attempting work of a quality that is beyond usual, or even reasonable, expectations in order to get good marks. • questioning the distribution of exam and assignment marks.	• displaying excessive emotional responses when their marks are not as high as they expected them to be. • being dissatisfied with academic performances significantly less than those previously achieved. • being aware (sometimes acutely) of their academic performance relative to other students.	• 'I want to do better in science and history than …[another student]'. • 'I like to compare how I am going against other students'. • 'I want to get most of my answers right so that I get a good overall mark'. • 'I hope to do well in my HSC [Higher School Certificate: the state-wide end of secondary school tertiary entrance examination in NSW] and have lots of jealous people behind me'. • 'I like to get high marks and beat other people'.
Mastery Wanting to achieve in order to demonstrate understanding, academic competence, or improved performance relative to self-established standards.	• putting extra work into the presentation of assignments even if there is no expectation of extra marks. • seeking challenging work for the sake of it. • asking more than the usual number of questions about the meaning of passages. • making applications connections of school knowledge to the 'real' world.	• [in mathematics] being pleased when the solution to a difficult problem is found. • enjoying challenging work even though it is more difficult. • being pleased when extra effort leads to a good (or better) result on a given piece of school work. • displaying a desire to understand things, even if it requires extra effort or explanation from the teacher.	• 'Sometimes I really want to learn. Like when I wanted to learn to use the lave in woodwork I was really interested because I wanted to learn how to use it'. • 'If I want to do well I'm doing it for myself'. • 'I know what I want to do when I leave school [be an airline pilot] so I work really hard so that I can get there'. • 'I like to work stuff out for myself so then I can do it any time I want'.
Work avoidance Wanting to achieve with as little effort as possible. Conversely, avoiding demanding achievement situations.	• being prone to copy, especially as work becomes more difficult. • constantly asking the teacher for assistance on relatively easy tasks. • repeatedly engaging in off task behaviour. • 'tuning out' on all but necessary tasks. • trying to negotiate less demanding alternatives to assessment general classroom tasks. • feigning incompetence or mis-understanding even when understanding or competence has been demonstrated earlier.	• feeling lazy or lethargic when attempting difficult work. • feeling 'psychologically inert' when attempting to begin difficult work. • feeling relieved when a choice of less taxing tasks are available. • wishing you were somewhere else. • feeling anger towards the teacher for assigning what is perceived to be difficult or demanding work.	• 'I don't want to do lots of hard work because I can't handle it. • 'I don't like to do homework, it takes too much time'. • 'Everyone wants to do easy work. Well, not everyone, but a lot'. • 'I don't like subjects that are too hard. The easy subjects are the best'. • 'If I'm bored with something then I don't want to work hard at it'.

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Social Goals			
Social approval Wanting to achieve in order to gain the approval of peers, teachers, and/or parents. Conversely, wanting to achieve in order to avoid social disapproval or rejection.	• asking teachers about academic performance or exam marks on behalf of parents. • inquiring about a teacher's prospective comments to their parents eg. by asking "what comment are you going to make to my parents?", or "how honest are you going to be with my parents?". • modifying classroom behaviour (such as by sitting up straight) when you know the teacher is ready to praise someone. • inventing stories of fictitious 'good deeds' in order to attract a teachers praise.	• desiring a teacher praise 'in return' fro good school work and then feeling satisfied when it is forthcoming. • feeling 'let down' having not received praise (or as much praise) as desired. • wanting parents to regularly show their approval for good school work. • feeling the desire to work hard when a public reward for school work is associated. • being embarrassed, to the point of avoiding contact with a teacher, if an 'acceptable' mark on a particular assignment was not achieved.	• 'I want to be praised by my family but not by other children in my class. I like teachers making a big deal about my work but not other students'. • 'I want mum and dad to be proud of me'. • 'I want to do well in school so that my parents will be pleased with me'. • 'I like it when I get a reward or people think that I've done a good job. It's nice to stand up in assembly and have people clap you'. • 'If I miss out on getting something [ie. a class award] at the end of the year I don't feel very good'.
Social responsibility Wanting to achieve in order to maintain interpersonal commitments, meet social role obligations, or follow social and moral 'rules'. Conversely, wanting to achieve in order to avoiding social transgressions and or unethical conduct.	• being involved in charity school fundraising activities. • volunteering for classroom jobs roles which assist the class to function smoothly. • being involved with student government eg. student representative councils. • assisting other students with school work. • making other students aware of school rules conventions. • being involved in peer tutoring schemes. • attempting to promote the social development/ interaction of less accepted peers.	• feeling personal pride at having contributed to a class school activity. • feeling an enhanced sense of 'belonging' having participated in an activity role. • feeling a desire to help other students. • feeling 'rejected' if an offer of help is refused. • enjoying being involved in activities that are perceived to 'make a difference' to the school or community. • looking forward to opportunities for involvement in community school projects.	• 'Sometimes if I'm good at something I'll want to help. I'll tell my mates 'come on, you can do it! You can kick that goal, you can think of a sentence, you can spell that word!'. • 'When I help my friends it helps me understand the work better. I learn things by trying to explain it to them'. • 'It's a good feeling when you help someone. Deep down you know you've done the right thing'. • 'I want to help at school but only if I'm in a good mood'.
Social affiliation Wanting to achieve in order to enhance a sense of belonging to a group or groups and/or to build or maintain inter-personal relationships. Conversely, wanting to achieve in order to avoiding feelings of separateness or isolation.	• wanting to work with other students in class. • assisting other students in class. • interacting academically with groups of students beyond the immediate class situation e.g. in study groups, group 'homework sessions', etc. • choosing group, in preference to individual, academic work. • suggesting group based academic activities to teachers.	• feeling a strong sense of solidarity with a particular group of friends in class. • desiring to be involved in academic activities in which a certain group of students are participating despite a personal dislike for the activity itself. • being unusually upset when rejected by a particular person or peer group in class. • wanting to do better in school in order to join a particular group or class.	• 'Well just say you're in a maths group at school. Well you try real hard to do the keep up [with school work] or else you won't feel really good in the group'. • 'I think that people will like me better if I do well in school'. • 'I want to do well in History because if I don't then I might have to move to a lower class and I then I wouldn't be with my friends'.

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Social status Wanting to achieve in order to attain wealth and/or position in school and/or later life. Conversely, wanting to achieve in order to avoid low status positions in either school or later life.	• working hard at school in order to get sufficient results to enter university. • working hard at school in order to be elected or appointed to positions in the school eg. school captain, prefects, etc. • making extra effort in school in order o increase the chances of attending a selective high school. • being diligent at school in order to be able to afford particular possessions (eg. a 'good' house or car) after leaving school.	• feeling anxious that you won't do well enough in school to get a high paying job. • feeling exited about the possibility of getting a 'good job' as a result of doing well at school.. • feeling pride when appointed to a high status position within the school eg. house or sporting team captain. • strongly desiring to own particular possessions and feeling 'motivated' to do well at school as a result.	• 'I want to do well at school so that I can get a good job that earns lots of money'. • 'I hope I will go well at school so that, when I leave, I can get a good job'. • 'If I go well at school then I might get to go to university and become a doctor or something'. • 'You can't get a decent job if you don't get good marks'. • 'I don't like school much but I want to live in a big house and drive Porshe when I grow up, so I'm going to do well [at school] so that I can afford them.

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